

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9531

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 3545

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS MILI CB

SUBJECT: MEKONG CONVOY UPDATE

THE FOLLOWING SENT CINCPAC HONOLULU AMEMB SAIGON MSCOV SAIGON
USDAO SAIGON AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH COMSCFE YOKOHAME AND MEDTC
PHNOM PENH DATED 26 FEB 75.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

CINCPAC FOR J4

REF: A. USSAG MSG 220740Z FEB 75 (C)

B. CINCPAC MSG 252306Z FEB 75 (U)

SUBJ: MEKONG CONVOY UPDATE (U)

1. (C) SINCE THE LAST UPDATE FIVE DAYS AGO SITUATION ON
THE MEKONG HAS DETERIORATED APPRECIABLY. THE KC TEMPORARILY OVERRAN
CHAMRAEUN KOAH ISLAND JUST OPPOSITE NEAK LUONG AND HAVE PUT
CONTINUOUS HEAVY PRESSURE ON THE NEAK LUONG PERIMETER.
CLEARING OPERATIONS ALONG HWY 1 IN THAT PERIMETER HAVE
NOT BEEN COMPLETED. BELOW NEAK LUONG AT SITE S-1
ARTILLERY PIECES WERE SPIKED AND ABANDONED YESTERDAY BEFORE THE
SLIM BN POSITION FELL WITH ONLY A SCORE OF SURVIVORS BEING
EVACUATED LAST NIGHT BY 8 MNK CRAFT TO SITE S-2.
SITE S-2 NOW HAS 5 BN EQUIVALENTS AND 3 OPERATIONAL
ARTILLERY PIECES. THEY ARE FACED BY A MUCH LARGER ENEMY
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FORCE.

2. (C) SINCE THE LAST REPORT (CEF A) MNK IN ITS MEKONG CONVOY OPERATIONS HAS LOST 6 ADDITIONAL CRAFT. THESE LOSSES COUPLED WITH ADDITIONAL BATTLE DAMAGE MEANS THAT MNK HAS LOST GROUND IN THE MAINTENANCE OF CRAFT. NOW LESS THAN HALF OF THE MEKONG CRAFT ARE FULLY OPERATIONAL. TO BE SUCCESSFUL MNK NEEDS AND IMMEDIATE INFLUX OF MONITORS AND LCMS TO PROVIDE THE FIREPOWER AND SUPPLY AND TROOP LIFT CAPABILITY NEEDED FOR SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ON THE LOWER MEKONG.

3.(C) THE KEY TO INITIATING CONVOY OPERATIONS IS STILL THE BANK CLEARING OPERATIONS SINCE IT IS DOUBTFUL IF MNK WILL SUCCESSFULLY SWEEP FOR MINES (OPERATIONS TO SEVER COMMUNICATIONS FOR COMMAND DETONATED MINES REQUIRE SWEEPS CLOSE TO THE BANKS) UNLESS THERE IS IMPROVED BANK SECURITY. WITHOUT MINE SWEEPS AND BANK SECURITY THE CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR TUG CREWS PROBABLY WILL NOT SAIL. BANK CLEARING OPERATIONS REQUIRE ADDITIONAL COMBAT BNS.

4. (C) THE SITUATION AROUND THE PHNOM PENH PERIMETER HAS ALSO WORSENER. IN THE NORTH THE 7TH DIV IS OVEREXTENDED BECAUSE OF SEVERE TROOP LOSSES. IN THE WEST THE 3RD DIV WHICH HAS DONE SO ADMIRABLY IS FULLY COMMITTED AND IN MULTIPLE CONTACTS. ALTHOUGH THE SOUTH IS QUIET NOW IT MAY NOT REMAIN SO. THE MAJOR PROBLEM IS THAT THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE RESERVES-- EITHER DIVISIONAL OR STRATEGIC. ANY MAJOR PENETRATIONS OF THE PERIMETER COULD BE MOST SERIOUS. THUS, THE LOWER MEKONG MUST COMPETE WITH PHNOM PENH, INCLUDING THE PROTECTION OF AMMO (KANTAU) AND AIRLIFT (POCHENTONG), FOR DESPERATELY REQUIRED REINFORCEMENTS.

5. ON THE PLUS SIDE, IN SVN THE MINE SWEEP BARGE ARRAY HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND SUCCESSFULLY TESTED. THE SHIELD BARGE BUNKERS WILL BE COMPLETED ON 27 FEB. A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE TO PULL THE AMMO BARGES WITH ONE

TUG EACH, THUS REDUCING TUG AND CREW REQUIREMENTS TO FOUR (CONSIDERING THE NEED FOR AN ESCORT TUG).

6. (C) CONSIDERING THE IMMEDIATE NEED TO BOLSTER PHNOM PENH DEFENSES WHICH COMPETES WITH THE REQUIREMENT TO REINFORCE THE LOWER MEKONG, THE BATTERED CONDITION OF THE MNK, A GENERAL FEELING OF FANK UNREST AS WELL AS THE LOSS OF ADDITIONAL POSITIONS ON THE LOWER MEKONG IT IS THE CONSIDERED JUDGMENT OF MEDTC/USSAG THAT THE BANKS OF THE

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LOWER MEKONG AT CRITICAL CHOKES POINTS PROBABLY WILL NOT BE SECURED IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THUS, IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE NEXT CONVOY WILL BE POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

7. THIS IS A COORDINATED MEDTC/USSAG MESSAGE.

GDS 31 DEC 81

UNQUOTE

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